

Ames Historical Society

AMES • IOWA

Newsletter to Members 2013 FALL.....ISSUE #3/4

*Discovering our history,
Preserving our past,
Sharing our stories.*



Abe Mezvinsky owned three Ames Fruit & Grocery stores in Ames. Pictured is the north side store near 24th & Grand

Ames Historical Society Board:
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The Board meets the 2nd Thursday of each month 6:45pm at 416 Douglas. Members welcome!

Director Casie Vance
Staff Alex Fejfar, Margaret Vance
Hannah Frederick
Volunteer Curator Dennis Wendell
Collections Manager Sarah Carlson
Facility Manager Neal Tarman
Newsletter Editor Kathy Svec

Ames Historical Society is an incorporated, 501c3 not-for-profit organization dedicated to promoting interest in local and state history through publications, programs, exhibitions and operation of an archive and historic site.

Headqtrs: 416 Douglas, Ames, IA 50010
Open Wed-Fri, 1-5pm
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Website: www.AmesHistory.org
Facebook: www.facebook.com/ameshistoricalsociety

The newsletter is published four times a year for AHS members. Direct comments and questions to: Editor, PO Box 821, Ames, IA 50010 or e-mail above.

Hoggatt School is located on the grounds of Meeker School, near 18th and Burnett, Ames, Iowa. Open April 1 through October 31.

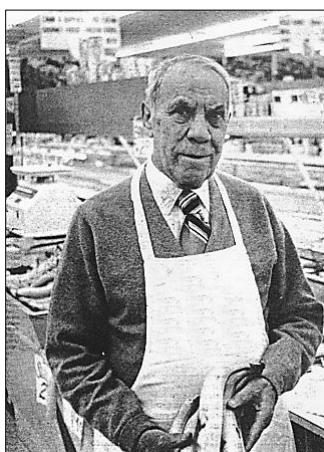
Abe Mezvinsky: His Life and Legacy in Ames, 1934 to 1980

A program to be presented by Norton and Ed Mezvinsky
on Friday, October 18, 7:30pm
at the Garden Room, Reiman Gardens, Ames (new location)
Free & open to the public



Abe Mezvinsky was born in 1894 in the Ukraine near Kiev. He arrived in Galveston, Texas, around 1910 as a 16-year-old with only a smattering of English and \$5 in his pocket. He moved from Texas to St. Louis and then to St Joseph, MO where his brother, Sam, lived. There he started a business running a fruit and vegetable cart. A few years later, Abe, his wife Fannie and their two daughters moved from St. Joseph to Red Oak in southwest Iowa. In Red Oak, Abe opened a fruit and grocery store that proved profitable. About this time, at the depth of the Great Depression, Abe made his one and only investment in stocks, purchasing shares of major corporations such as General Motors. This proved to be a stellar decision!

Members of the Mezvinsky family were the first Jews to live in Red Oak. So when Norton was born in 1932, the appropriate religious person had to be brought in from Omaha for the circumcision ceremony. Having made money in Red Oak, in 1934 Abe and Fannie and their three children moved to Ames, IA. There Abe designed and supervised a hand-picked crew in construction of the family home at 105 Ninth Street (9th & Duff) during the mid-1930s. Their last child, Edward, was born in January 1937.



Abe plunged headlong into the grocery business. His first store, Ames Fruit & Grocery, was on North 2nd Street, adjacent to the Chicago & Northwestern railroad tracks. It didn't take long before Mezvinsky had made his mark as a grocer and as a businessman and not just in Story County. At one time, he owned grocery stores in seven Iowa towns. In Ames, he expanded, opening a north side Fruit & Grocery on the site of today's Ace Hardware and a west side store at what is now Colorado Junction.

Abe also purchased and sold several farms in central and northern Iowa. He sometimes bought farms for low prices either without actually seeing them or else after a drive-by where he looked to see how high the weeds were growing in the fields. This was his way of determining if the land was being farmed properly. Not being a farmer himself, Abe leased his farms to tenants on the understanding that they would make at least as much money as he did. Good tenants were sometimes rewarded with an even greater share of the profits.

This was one of several reasons why Abe earned a reputation as a shrewd but fair businessman. In addition to his business acumen, Abe quickly established himself in Ames (and beyond) as a benefactor to those in need and a supporter of worthy causes.

For the complete story, please attend on October 18! Organizers would be pleased to have audience members share their memories of Abe and the stores. For those unable to be in Ames, the program will be recorded on DVD.

by Tom Emmerson

August 24 Benefit a Big Success!

The Society's first benefit dinner on August 24 was a wonderful social evening that garnered \$4,786 for the Ames Historical Society Endowment.

In addition to seeing old friends and meeting new ones, attendees enjoyed the premiere of the Society's new film, "Stitched Into Time: Remembering Collegiate Manufacturing Company of Ames, Iowa" produced by Teresa Larson and Jeff Grummer of B&G Productions, Ames. Present that evening were several former Collegiate Manufacturing employees, all of whom provided important information to the film makers:

JACK ADAMS began working part-time at Collegiate as a student and wore various hats during his full-time tenure 1956-1972. Starting as purchasing agent, he was promoted to business manager and ultimately vice-president of the firm. He not only gained experience being a salesman on the road, but attended dinners at the Des Moines Club and the annual conventions of the National Association of College Stores. As a member of Kaffee Klatsch, a group of influential businessmen who met daily in Collegiate's basement, he was privy to all the latest developments affecting the community. One of the worst days of his life came in June 1968 as he was piloting his airplane back to Ames and saw the black smoke billowing up from the disastrous Collegiate warehouse fire. Jack's donation to the Historical Society of Collegiate archival material dating back to the Tilden Manufacturing Company has been critical in interpreting the history of both businesses.

STEVE GROOMS, (pictured, left) the son of George Grooms, was in attendance representing his father who served as artist, head of the art department and later production manager at Collegiate between 1936 and 1960. George was the genius behind the engaging stuffed toy animals and creator of the original ISU Cy and Minnesota Goldie Gopher mascots. Steve spent the summers of 1957 through 1959 working in the 108 5th Street annex. Steve has related interesting tales of the realities of the silk screening production line, including the "blast furnace" conditions. Steve is now a freelance writer residing in St. Paul, Minnesota. Steve has committed his recollections of growing up in Ames to paper, providing unique insights into his father's career at Collegiate as well as Animal Fair, the business George founded after he left Ames.



GENE FIGURA, the successor to George Grooms, was artist 1955-1956 and head of the art department 1956-1969. Besides creating hundreds of highly successful designs, Gene invented a new method for cutting stencils and introduced the use of photography in the design process. Gene has donated his collection of original designs and Personality Pets and provided valuable information about the operation and history of the art department. Gene was one of three generations of family members employed by Collegiate. These included his mother-in-law and daughter. In fact, daughter Lori at age 2 appeared on a catalog cover with the super-scaled St. Bernard stuffed toy dog. After leaving Collegiate, Gene joined the faculty of ISU's College of Design, retiring in 1993.

JIM WILCOX (pictured, right) was an employee of a later era when the corporate name was Collegiate-Pacific with operations at 525 East 2nd Street. He worked as staff artist alongside Gene Figura's daughter from 1980 to 1983. Like Gene, Jim has donated his collection of original designs, all categorized and placed in folders by topics and genres, A to Z. There are examples on paper, PMT transfers, acetate color separation rubyliths, and Pellon cloth that trace the evolution of a given product from the first design through the finished silk-screened shirt. Jim is an employee of the ISU Library.

DON FAAS, inveterate collector for some 40 years of all things Ames-related found on eBay and elsewhere, passed away in 2009. He was represented at the benefit by his collector son, **TIM** and his non-collector wife, **ELAINE**. With Tim's wise guidance and knowledge of Don's collections, the Ames items were steered to the Historical Society. Elaine was pleased at gaining back space when well-over 100 Collegiate Personality Pets and mascots were removed from a wall of shelving! The many duplicates are instructive in illustrating how a basic design could be re-used with small changes and new imprinting to accommodate diverse colleges and universities.





AHS Director, Casie Vance, left, and Jan Breitman, event organizer, right, greeted benefit guests as they arrived.



Benefit attendees visited with friends, browsed exhibits of Collegiate Manufacturing goods and bid on gift baskets.



The Octagon's Main Gallery provided a cozy setting. Table centerpieces featured items from AHS collections and dessert was served on genuine Sheldon-Munn Hotel china!



The Society is grateful to the 25 donors that provided elements for enticing gift baskets for the silent auction. The endowment benefit will become an annual event.

Spohnheimer Honored with First FTB Award



The Society has developed a special recognition to be awarded annually. It is named in honor of Ames historian and Ames Historical Society founder, Farwell T. Brown. Farwell was the grandson of two early families. He grew up in Ames and inherited his family's photographs and mementoes. These formed the basis of his interest in local history that began after he retired from the I.D.O.T. in 1976. His legacy is remarkable and all that the Society does builds upon his work.

The first Farwell T. Brown Award for Exceptional Service to Ames Historical Society was awarded to Alan Spohnheimer for his special understanding of the community importance of local history work that honors individuals and records the stories of our collective past. Alan's commitment, loyalty, ingenuity and imagination in his role as our administrator for seven years demonstrated a high quality of achievement in serving the organization and the community. The award recognizes the essential role that persons of vision and dedication play in the vitality of the Ames Historical Society.

Alan's comments (left) to those assembled at the benefit demonstrated his remarkable progress in recovering from injuries sustained in a fall a year ago. He stated his hopes for relearning things he once knew and to be of service once again to the organization.

Society News – Renovation!

Renovation Underway at HQ

Through the support of our loyal members, the Society has accumulated the resources to expand into more space in our headquarters building at 416 Douglas. Renovations to occupy the entire first floor are well underway and have occurred in several phased segments so staff members could maintain their daily schedules. Grau Construction Co. is doing the work.

Phase 1 – To facilitate the expansion, our first floor tenant moved from suite 100 to second floor. For their needs in suite 205, one wall was removed, the walls painted and a sink, cabinets and new carpet installed.

Phase 2 - Walls were removed in the former tenant space in suite 100. An accordion door was installed so that half of the future display gallery can be used as a conference or presentation area. Volunteer Jeff Breitman painted the gallery and hallway. A new interior glass front door and sidelight were installed. Carpet in the display gallery was patched.

Move A - Everything was moved from the old display space, director's office and board room into the future display gallery. Temporary display space was created in the front half of the gallery and behind the accordion door was temporary staff office space and storage.

Phase 3 - Walls were moved to expand the future staff workroom. A new door to the future archives area was installed. Two walls were removed to create the future Struss Media Room and cabinets and a sink were installed. The HVAC system was rearranged so the future archives can be kept at a lower temperature. Volunteer Jeff Breitman painted the media room and new workroom.

Move B - Staff and volunteer workstations were moved into their permanent positions in the new workroom. The internet hub was moved. With help from many volunteers, the archives and archival shelving were moved to the east half of the display gallery, where they will be stored until Move C.

Phase 4 – Walls and carpet removed in the future archives area. Panic hardware installed on the back door, creating a staff-only entrance and emergency exit.

Move C - The archive will be moved into its permanent position by late October. The bound volumes of the Tribune will be moved from offsite storage to HQ along with their shelving. The media room will be set up, resource shelves will be installed in the hallway and by the end of October, displays for the opening will be set up in the exhibit gallery and lobby.

SAVE THE DATE!



GRAND OPENING

of the newly renovated space will be
Wednesday, November 6,
4-6pm at 416 Douglas, Ames.

Tour the new spaces, view exhibits throughout the building, view local history videos in the Struss Media Room and enjoy refreshments.

❖
Expanded open hours will begin
Monday, November 11.

New hours will be Mon. - Fri., 1 to 5pm.



Packing boxes dominated most spaces at 416 Douglas while renovation was underway.



In the former tenant space in suite 100, walls were removed to create open space for exhibits, presentations and a new reception area.

Society News

About the C.M.C. Film...

After the showing of the Collegiate Manufacturing Company film at our benefit, producer Teresa Larson received this note from Carmen Christensen, the wife of long-time C.M.C. manager, Andy Christensen: "I know Andy told you how wonderful the story of Collegiate Mfg. was and I also wanted to share my feelings. I thought it was outstanding and am truly in awe of your skills in putting this together. You are very talented and I think you should enter the field of documentary production. I wish (former owners) Clint (Adams) and Chev (Adams) could have seen it!"

Happily for those who have not yet had a chance to see the film, it is available on DVD for \$20. Call 515-232-2148 or email, info@ameshistory.org. The film will also be shown during our 2014 lecture series when Teresa will provide an expanded C.M.C. story at the March lecture.

New Website Address & Email

During the process of updating our website, a new address and email has been created.

For future Ames history internet browsing, please use www.ameshistory.org. For messages, please use info@ameshistory.org.

For the near future, both the old web address and old email address will still work.

Fun Feedback from Facebook:

The Society maintains a presence on Facebook and each week, posts the photo image that also appears in the Ames Tribune. The picture below received more comments and "likes" than any other photo posted - 101 likes, 30 comments, 13 shares and 3,564 people saw the post. One of the comments was from Ann Yates herself! The original caption is below:



Believe it or not, 12 year old Ames girl, Ann Yates, made it under the limbo stick just 7 1/2 inches above the floor, which she believed to be a world record. To remedy the problem of her skates catching on the bar she folded down the tops and taped them in place. It took her about three years to develop the flexibility to accomplish this feat which she performed for the Summerfest fundraiser in 1979. (Tribune photo from August 13, 1979)

Staffing and Volunteers

Our new Collections Manager, **Sarah Carlson**, started Monday, September 9. She has been assisting volunteer Curator Dennis Wendell with various collections tasks and has been training to process deeds of gift. Her 20 hour/week schedule is Monday and Tuesday, 8am-5pm plus alternating Wednesday and Thursday afternoons. Half of Sarah's salary is funded by the City of Ames/ Historic Preservation Commission to facilitate research on historic properties, with the remaining coming from Society operations. Though she is a recent graduate of ???, Sarah has had extensive experience in curatorial work in a number of different settings. We are very pleased to have her!

Our Facilities Assistant, **James Williams**, is an Iowa State anthropology major who will (unhappily for us) graduate in December. James has genuinely enjoyed his work for the Society and we have benefitted from his conscientious work and enthusiasm.

A new volunteer, ISU student **Emma Altheide**, has taken over the file reorganization for our research computer hard drive – a tedious but necessary project that will assist staff and researchers in finding historic digital images in our collection. Our summer intern from Central College, Colin Shawgo, made it more than halfway through the project. There are hopes it will be done in time for the November 6 Grand Opening.

Another new volunteer, **Cara McCoy**, has been working on entering obituaries from the Adams Funeral Home scrapbooks into a searchable database.

Staff Professional Development

Valuable training in museum practices is available annually at various association conferences.

Three staff members attended the online conference of American Association of State and Local History on September 19 and 20. This year the sessions were: The Continuum of Excellence and How Your Museum Can Be Part of It; Recruiting, Orienting, and Engaging Board Members; Small Museums, Big Impact!; Managing Change: The Keys to Successful Transitions within Historic Organizations; Volunteers: Ordinary People, Extra-ordinary Change; and Working with Community to Address Things that Matter Locally.

Staff also attended the annual Iowa Museum Association conference in Sioux City, October 6-8. This year's theme was *Building Bridges: Growing Resources*. Of particular interest was a session on endowment fundraising.

Have School, Will Travel

The Ames Community School District is developing plans to build a new Meeker School building on the same site at 20th & Burnett. As a result, Hoggatt School will be relocated. This project offers an opportunity to improve accessibility and visitor parking and add electricity (discreetly).



After working closely with District officials, many unique problems have been resolved. The little structure will be hoisted onto a moving structure and "parked" on the south edge of the current playground while construction proceeds, then moved to a new site on the playground.

Sharon Wirth and Carol Phillips are the appointed liaisons working with the District on details of the move that should take place in late October. The contents will be removed and placed in storage. The school will not be available for tours after October 3.

Ames 150th Approaches

The Ames Sesquicentennial will be marked in 2014 with a number of special events that are now in the planning stages. It is not too late to become involved!

The Society plans several exhibits both at our headquarters at 416 Douglas and at the Octagon Center for the Arts at 427 Douglas.

The exhibit at the Octagon will be titled, **"Defining Ames: 150 Historic People, Places and Events, 1864-2014."** A committee has been working diligently to identify ten general categories and 150 key items to include. Those categories are:

- Educating Our Youth
- Entertaining the Public
- Fascinating Events
- Founding Our Town
- Gathering Places
- Getting Around
- Interesting Personalities
- Moving Forward
- Serving the Community
- Surprising Facts

Members interested in being involved by "adopting" several items to research and write exhibit captions may contact us at info@ameshistory.org or call 515-232-2148.

AHS Endowment Fund

The proceeds from the Benefit, plus several recent gifts and memorials added nearly \$10,000 to our Endowment, boosting the total to over \$112,000. We are so grateful to our members, donors and friends!

Contributions to the Endowment's principle stay in the fund and grow. Each year, 5% of that growth is available to the Society to support daily operations and staff salaries.



While we are very excited to begin occupying the whole first floor of our building, our long-range plan is to use the entire second floor as well.

Revenue from an Endowment of \$650,000 would provide sufficient resources to be able to do this – so work on growing the fund will go on! Please remember the Society in your estate plans.

The Endowment Fund is housed at the Story County Community Foundation, a subset of the Greater Des Moines Community Foundation. To learn more about 2013 Endow Iowa Tax Credits and the Charitable IRA Rollover, call the SCCF at 515-232-9200 or go to www.storycountycfoundation.org.

Brookside Zoo Image

Curator Dennis Wendell wrote this note in a recent Collections Report, "Hooray! Hooray! After 13 years of alerting people to our Want List of archival material and artifacts, the effort has finally paid off!"



He received the donation of a photo of the Brookside Park Zoo. It was located on the west bank of Squaw Creek near the swinging bridge (left) during the 1930s and 1940s. The tiny, black & white, 2x3" photo shows "Brooksie" the bear in a cage.

Dennis says, "It's puzzling why this subject has been so difficult to document, since many families brought their children to the small zoo. Residents recall the animal smells (especially after a heavy rain) more than the occupants of the cages. Now, we need to come up with an image of the zoo's monkey whose skull we have on display in one of our lobby cases."

Local Stories – the Civil War Sesquicentennial in Story County

About Jason DeVillo Ferguson: Story County's First Civil War Fatality

By William O. Payne, *History of Story County, Chapter XIX*, The S.J. Clarke Publishing Co., 1911.

"The Twelfth Iowa Infantry [for service in the Civil War] was a regiment in which Story County had a small representation. But this representation was notable because it was headed by Jason D. Ferguson, who had served in the First Iowa, became one of the organizers of Company D of the Twelfth Iowa at Cedar Rapids and was elected its first lieutenant, was mortally wounded at Shiloh and has given his name to the Grand Army Post at Nevada."

Company D officer, Capt. E. B. Soper, provided this tribute to Lieutenant Ferguson: "Jason D. Ferguson [of Nevada] enlisted with other Cornell College students at Mount Vernon, April 18, 1861 in Company K, 1st Regiment, Iowa Infantry Volunteers. During his 3-month term, he displayed soldierly qualities and conspicuous gallantry at the Battle of Wilson's Creek [Missouri]. After the muster out of the regiment, Ferguson was invited to assist in the formation of a company for the 12th Iowa Volunteers at Cedar Rapids and they secured as many of their comrades of the 1st Iowa as were willing to enlist.

"When the war broke out Nathan Price, a friend of Ferguson's, was seeking gold at Pike's Peak and he came home as fast as an ox team could hurry. Ferguson and Price planned to join their Story County friends in the 2nd Iowa Cavalry at Davenport but they were prevailed upon to enlist in Co. D of the 12th Iowa. Ferguson was elected first lieutenant and was a most competent and acceptable officer. He served with credit at Fort Donelson and distinguished himself at Shiloh. About the time of the surrender of his regiment on the evening of April 6, 1862, he received a mortal wound.

"On the march to the position assigned to the command, a premonition of certain death came to Ferguson that he communicated to his friend Price, though he conducted himself with great gallantry. Between attacks of the enemy upon the position of the regiment at the Hornet's Nest, he imparted to his friend Price messages to his family and kindred and also specified articles he wanted sent to each. When surrounded and while attempting to break through the rebel lines toward the Landing of the 3rd Iowa Infantry camp, a bullet passed through his body inflicting a mortal wound. Price asked permission to care for him and a confederate guard was placed in charge.

"During the night, Price and his guard were employed in

caring for Ferguson and other wounded of both armies. The night was indescribable: rain falling, groans of wounded and dying, bursting shells from the gun boats exploding on them but nevertheless both faithfully worked, bringing water and ministering to the sufferers. When the Federals advanced in line of battle on the 7th causing a retreat of the rebels, Price, to escape being taken from Ferguson and compelled to join his comrades in a southern prison, wrapped bloody garments about him and groaned in feigned agony as the confederates' rear guard gathered up those who were able to travel. After the advance of the federal lines the wounded were gathered up and transferred to the landing to be placed on steamers, but Ferguson died after reaching the landing, during the forenoon of the 7th [becoming Story County's first fatality]. Price fought to the end of the battle with an Illinois regiment belonging to Buell's army and has the distinction of being the one man of the 12th Iowa that fought both days in the thick of battle at Shiloh.



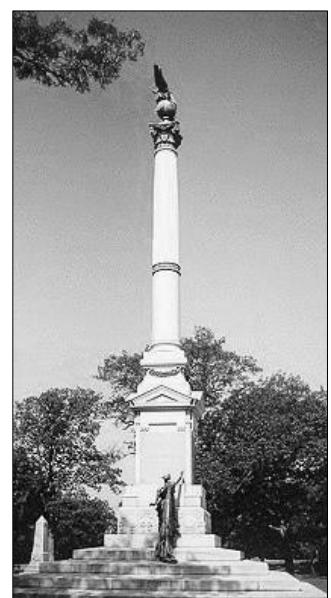
both days in the thick of battle at Shiloh.

"Ferguson was a young officer of promise, a born leader of men and a man of high moral character, pure motives, prompt intelligence and efficiency. His loss was deplored by his company and regiment. His comrades buried him near the camp on the high bluff overlooking the Tennessee River and his body now rests in a known grave in the beautiful national cemetery at Pittsburg Landing."

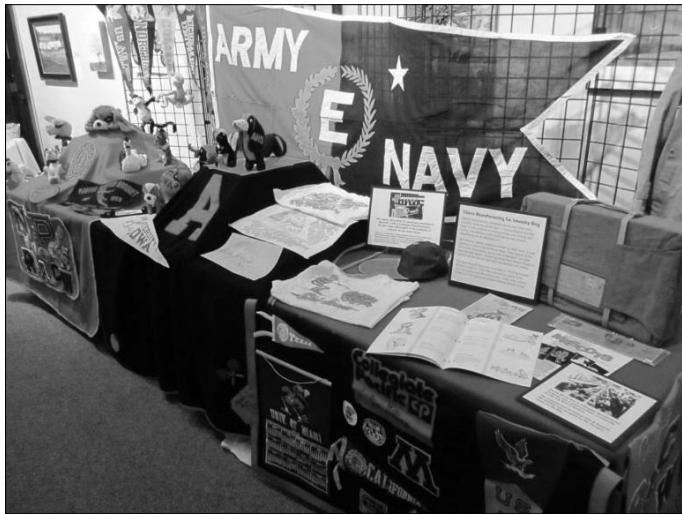
Nevada's Grand Army of the Republic Post #31 and the Woman's Relief Corps, Auxiliary to the GAR Post #147 are named in Ferguson's honor.



Iowa War Monument at Shiloh National Military Park, Pittsburg Landing, Tennessee



"Like" us on Facebook and follow us there:
www.facebook.com/ameshistoricalsociety



An extensive collection of items from Collegiate Manufacturing Company were on display during the August 24 Benefit. We are pleased to have so many products represented in the Society's collection.

Is it time to renew your membership?

Renewals are due on the one-year anniversary of last year's payment. Check this newsletter's label for information about your membership. Memberships fund the day-to-day operations of the Society, allowing us to continue to be a valued community resource. We thank you!

Introductory - 1st year	\$10	Sustaining	\$100
Individual	\$25	Partner	\$250
Family	\$40	Benefactor	\$500
Friend	\$50	Patron	\$1,000

Name _____

Address _____

Ames Historical Society, PO Box 821, Ames, IA 50010

Consider This Type of Donation

Several donors have contributed objects specifically earmarked for re-sale through the online auction, ebay. Proceeds from these sales support collections care and other projects. A new volunteer, recent retiree, Hank Zaletel, is placing these items on ebay and has already been successful in selling a number of them.

Additional items offered for sale are those that were donated with "no strings attached" that were not appropriate for our collection.



Return Service Requested

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